

Godfather of Sudoku

If you open up a newspaper today, you'll probably find a crossword puzzle and a Sudoku. Crossword puzzles have been around for a very long time. But what about Sudoku? It might surprise you to know that Sudoku was created around 1983 and only became popular around 2004. So whom can we thank for this invention?

Maki Kaji is credited as the creator of Sudoku number puzzles. Born in Japan, Maki studied at the University of Tokyo. He left the university in 1983 to start a puzzle company called Nikoli. It was around this time that Maki came up with the idea of Sudoku.

The name Sudoku is made of the Japanese characters for number and single. When working a Sudoku, players place the number 1 through 9 in rows and columns without repeating them. Sudoku can range from easy to hard, depending how many numbers are given to start.

Known as the Godfather of Sudoku, Maki traveled to over 30 countries spreading the word about his puzzles. When a fan in New Zealand got a Sudoku published in a British newspaper, things really took off. The puzzles became so popular that Sudoku championships were born. Over the years, the championships have attracted over 200 million people in 100 countries.



Sudoku is now considered the world’s most popular pencil puzzle. But it also now has digital forms. Representatives from Maki’s company say he would be happy no matter how people are playing his games. They describe him as having had a “unique and playful approach toward life,” which led to his creativity.

A relatively new creation, Sudoku is already a word in the Oxford English Dictionary. It is likely that the puzzles will continue to be popular, just like crosswords, and anagrams. Maki, who died in 2021, gave a gift to the world with his puzzle creation.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. When was Sudoku invented?
 - a. 2021
 - b. 2004
 - c. 1983
 - d. 1930

2. What two Japanese characters form the word Sudoku?
 - a. Number and square
 - b. Number and single
 - c. Single and square
 - d. One and nine

3. What was the name of Maki's company?
 - a. Kaji
 - b. Sudoku
 - c. Tokyo
 - d. Nikoli

4. How do you think Maki would feel about the word Sudoku appearing in the Oxford English dictionary?
 - a. Jealous
 - b. Proud
 - c. Annoyed
 - d. Indifferent

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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